



OSHA Expands Forklift Training Requirements

On Dec. 1, 1998, federal OSHA published its final rule expanding the training requirements for powered industrial trucks (i.e., forklifts). The revised standard, 1910.178(l), applies to maritime and construction, as well as general industry.



As with the previous requirement, all employees must be trained before operating a forklift. Besides formal instruction, the training must include practical training (such as demonstrations) and an evaluation of the operator in the workplace to assure he or she can operate the forklift safely. Initial training content must consist of both truck-related topics and workplace-related topics. The truck-related topics normally covered must include:

- operating instructions, warnings and precautions specific to the trucks the employee will be authorized to operate;
- differences between the truck and the automobile;
- truck controls and instrumentation;
- engine or motor operation;
- steering and maneuvering;
- visibility;
- fork and attachment adaptation, operation and use limitations;
- vehicle capacity;
- vehicle stability;
- any vehicle inspection and maintenance that the operator must perform;
- refueling and/or charging and recharging of batteries;
- operating limitations; and
- any other information from the forklift operator's manual.

Workplace-related topics normally must include:

- surface conditions where the vehicle will be operated;
- composition of loads and load stability;
- load manipulation, stacking and unstacking;
- pedestrian traffic;
- narrow aisles and other restricted places where the vehicle will be operated;
- any hazardous (classified) locations, such as flammable storage areas, where the vehicle will be operated;
- ramps and other sloped surfaces;
- closed environments and other areas where insufficient ventilation or poor vehicle maintenance could cause a buildup of carbon monoxide or diesel exhaust; and
- other unique or potentially hazardous environmental conditions in the workplace.

Each driver must be re-evaluated at least once every three years to assure he or she can operate the forklift safely. Refresher training (including evaluation) must be conducted whenever an employee is observed operating a truck unsafely, there is an accident or near-miss, an employee fails his or her evaluation, the employee is assigned to operate a different type of truck or when there are changes in the workplace that affect safe industrial truck operation. The employer must also certify that the training and evaluation is completed.

Also added to the standard is a nonmandatory Appendix A, which provides information about the stability of powered industrial trucks to assist the employer with the training content. The [standard can be found on the federal OSHA Web site](#).